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ABSTRACT

An action research project, Education for Dignity and Rapid Achievement (EDRA), produces exceptional growth in student learning and behavior. EDRA emphasizes student growth in academics, self concept, and courtesy. Attitudes shared by the sixteen participating teachers included the importance of teaching and learning, the teacher as a role model, self concept, and parent teacher communication. Standardized achievement tests (mathematics and reading), a student self concept scale, and written comments from school personnel and parents indicate the program's effectiveness. Test results and parent comments are appended. (CJ)

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EDUCATION FOR DIGNITY AND RAPID ACHIEVEMENT

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The EDRA Study

In 1978-79, sixteen elementary teachers in San Diego County, California, participated in a project that produced exceptional growth in student learning and behavior. The growth rates ranged up to three times greater than normal in reading and mathematics. The students' uncommon courtesy, self control, and concern for others brought commentary from many quarters. Student self concepts were maintained at very strong levels.

These notable results were accomplished in an action research project called EDRA--Education for Dignity and Rapid Achievement. EDRA involved sixteen teachers and almost 500 students in grades K through 6, representing a wide range of abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds. The teachers received no extra incentives, no privileges, recognition, or money. The year's effort required no budget at all; not a single extra penny was spent.

The teachers' attitudes about teaching and learning comprised the strand that united their efforts. The investigator had worked with all of the teachers in graduate or undergraduate programs, and knew them to be serious, dedicated, concerned about learning, and disposed toward communicating well with students and their parents.

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The investigator invited these teachers to put their teaching abilities to public test. They were to strive for student growth in three areas: 1) academics (math and reading), 2) self concept, and 3) good manners. In their attempts to produce this growth, they were urged to place strong emphasis on the following:

Academics

-Essential content

-Modeling and expository teaching

-Keeping students on task

-Meaningful practice and application of learnings

Self Concept

-Tangible evidence of progress

-Parental attention to specific progress

-Sharing efforts and products with classmates

-Meaningful recognition from teacher, parents, and class members

Good Manners

-Best teacher model

-Insistence on Golden Rule behavior

-Forbiddance of sarcasm and cruelty

-Practice in situations calling for courtesy and manners

The teachers were also urged to establish and maintain close communication with parents, to inform them and secure their support, through an organized system that might include notes, newsletters, calendars of events, phone calls, and personal conferences.

Within these guidelines, EDRA teachers were directed to follow their normal schedules and to use their own preferred materials, activities, and styles of teaching.

Nineteen teachers began the project. One withdrew after the first month. A second moved to another city, and a third went on maternity leave. The remaining sixteen completed the year.

The teachers met together five times during the year. Their ways of teaching varied considerably, but early discussions confirmed that all adhered to six basic beliefs:

1. Teaching and learning are serious business. They should be approached as such, though tempered with good humor.
2. Learning activities should always pull students forward. Activities that merely fill time, however enjoyably, are not acceptable.
3. Students should be kept constantly on task.
4. Teachers should forever model courtesy, good manners, and concern for others. They should set standards in these areas and provide training for their students.
5. Self concept grows from three sources: increased competence, recognition from others, and genuine attempts to help others.
6. Parents are teachers' best allies. They should be kept fully informed about objectives , programs, and progress, and their help should continually be sought.

In May, 1979, the schools provided standardized achievement testing. The EDRA teachers administered a student self concept scale, and they compiled written comments about student manners that had come from administrators, other teachers, substitute teachers, parents, librarians, custodians, cafeteria workers, and others.

EDRA Results

Academics

Reading and mathematics were selected as test areas for academic growth. The following data show that fifteen of the classes made gains greater than normal, while one class made gains less than normal.

EDRA Achievement Data for
Mathematics and Reading, by Grade Level,
Expressed in Grade Equivalent Scores (except K_1 K_2)

Grade	K_1 math	K_1 reading	K_2 math	K_2 reading	1 math	1 reading	2_1 math	2_1 reading
pre	--	--	--	--	(assumed 1.0)		2.29	1.87
	median	stanine	median	stanine				
post	7	7	5	6	2.25	2.45	3.71	3.30
gain					1.25	1.45	1.42	1.43
*interval					.90	.90	1.00	1.00
excess	2 sta.		-0-sta.		.35	.55	.42	.43

Grade	2_2 math	2_2 reading	2-3 math	2-3 reading	3_1 math	3_1 reading	3_2 math	3_2 reading
pre	2.61	2.48	(assumed 2.4)		(assumed 3.0)		2.86	2.93
post	4.00	3.55	3.91	4.60	4.60	4.40	5.20	4.69
gain	1.39	1.07	1.51	2.20	1.60	1.40	2.34	1.76
interval	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.80	.80	1.00	1.00
excess	.39	.07	.51	1.20	.80	.60	1.34	.76

*Interval is the portion of the school year between pre and post testing.

(con't)

Achievement Data (con't)

Grade	3_3 math	3_3 reading	3_4 math	3_4 reading	4_1 math	4_1 reading	4_2 math	4_2 reading
pre	3.45	3.90	2.70	3.04	4.15	4.43	4.53	4.85
post	6.59	6.55	3.39	4.50	4.65	5.19	6.81	6.63
gain	3.14	2.65	1.23	1.46	.50	.76	2.28	1.78
interval	.75	.75	.70	.70	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
excess	2.39	1.90	.53	.76	-.50	-.24	1.28	.78

Grade	5_1 math	5_1 reading	5_2 math	5_2 reading	5_3 math	5_3 reading	6 math	6 reading
pre	7.21	7.94	4.43	4.62	3.66	3.67	7.96	9.13
post	8.33	9.43*	6.20	6.06	5.34	5.37	10.65**	10.85**
gain	1.12	1.49	1.67	1.44	1.68	1.70	2.69	1.72
interval	.80	.80	.80	.80	1.00	1.00	.75	.75
excess	.32	.69	.87	.64	.68	.70	1.94	.97

* Ceiling effect: 10 students at maximum reading score (10.5)

** Ceiling effect: 11 students at maximum math score (11.9)
8 students at maximum reading score (11.9)

Class Descriptions

K_1 Multiethnic: Black, Oriental, Hispanic, Anglo. N = 21/26

K_2 80% Anglo: Transient. N = 20/31

1 75% Anglo: Transient. N = 20/32

2_1 75% Anglo; 25% Hispanic: Transient. N = 23/31

2_2 80% Anglo: Transient. N = 24/30

2-3 80% Anglo: Middle, stable. N = 25/27

3_1 75% Anglo: Transient. N = 25/31

3_2 80% Anglo: Middle, stable. N = 28/29

3_3 Predominantly Anglo. Upper middle; stable. Gifted. N = 28/29

3_4 80% Anglo. Transient. N = 25/30

4_1 Predominantly Anglo. Transient. N = 25/29

4_2 65% Anglo; 35% Hispanic. Transient. N = 20/27

5_1 Predominantly Anglo. Upper middle, stable. Gifted. N = 34/34

5_2 Parochial. Multiethnic, stable. N = 32/34

5_3 75% Anglo. Low cluster. Transient. N = 20/30

6 Predominantly Anglo. Upper middle, stable. Gifted. N = 31/31

Data are reported only for students who enrolled prior to January 1, 1979, and were still enrolled at the time of testing. The numbers of such students are shown for each class. In class 5_3, for example, of the 30 students who were enrolled at the time of testing, 20 had enrolled prior to January 1, 1979.

Self Concept

A non-standardized self concept scale was administered to EDRA students in June, 1979. Student responses indicated strong self image, supporting EDRA teachers' conviction that their students' self concepts were stronger than average for age and grade level.

Two teachers also asked parents for appraisals of their children's attitudes and views of themselves:

1. (6th grade gifted, 18 responses) Items:

My child's attitude toward school at end of year--

improved -- 12

same as last year -- 6

worsened -- 0

My child's attitude about getting along with others--

improved -- 10

same as last year -- 7

worsened -- 1

My child's attitude toward self--

improved -- 10

same as last year -- 8

worsened -- 0

2. (5th grade parochial multiethnic, 24 responses) Items:

Please rate your child's overall opinion about him or herself on a five point scale, with 1 being low and 5 being high.

16 rated at 5.0

5 rated at 4.0

1 rated at 3.5

1 rated at 3.0

1 rated at 2.0

Please indicate any change you have seen in your child's self concept this year.

improved -- 17

unchanged -- 7

worsened -- 0

Manners

EDRA teachers stressed courtesy and manners, and they received many spoken and written comments about the laudable behavior of their students.

The following are examples of written comments received:

Kindergarten (multiethnic)

"The only thing to say about the manners of the children is that they are wonderful." (Parent)

"The children knew how to sit quietly, listen, work hard, and cooperate with classmates." (Resource Teacher)

"I really appreciate the way you have helped me with teaching my child manners, discipline, and respect for others. You have made my job a lot easier." (Parent)

3rd grade (transient)

"The children treat each other with respect. There is no bickering, verbal byplay, name calling, scapegoating, or fault finding. They have demonstrated courtesy to me as a visitor in the room." (University Professor)

"I have found these students to be always courteous and attentive. They demonstrate genuine respect for adults. They also seem to respect their classmates and appear to really like each other." (School Librarian)

"It is a real pleasure to visit the students and adults in Room 8. All of the children are polite to each other and to all adults at school. The project of stressing good academics, good feelings about oneself, good feelings about others, and

good manners is so fantastic I strongly recommend that this project be utilized in every classroom." (School Principal)

3rd grade (gifted)

The following were written comments from parents on report cards that were returned:

"How happy and fortunate we are to share your talents and capabilities. Thank you for everything--above all for your emphasis on the importance of the children's self esteem."

"You've excited our son about school. We thank you for improving his self-image!"

"We're very pleased with our daughter's progress. Thank you for doing wonders for her self concept."

"We are excited about our daughter's progress, but especially her positive attitude towards education!"

"This school year our son has demonstrated excellent motivation, a competitive spirit, along with an improved self concept."

"Our son has learned so much from you this year. He now knows that gifts don't have to cost money, be expensive or even be visible to the eye to bring pleasure."

"Thank you for your kindness, thoughtfulness, interest, patience, understanding, and caring."